

Voter November-December 2012

The League of Women Voters Kansas City/Jackson/Clay/Platte Counties

Saturday December 8, 2012 ** 10:30am – 1:00pm
Community Christian Church—4601 Main St, KCMO 64112

'WHO IS GOING TO FEEL THE PINCH'

SPEAKER: Dr. Stephanie Kelton

Chair, Department of Economics, UMKC.

Your \$15.00 check to "LWVKC/JCP" is your reservation.

Don't wait! Your check must be in
on or before Friday, November 30th

to treasurer: Elaine Lenz, 9905 Jarboe, KC,MO 64114

Carpooling is a great idea! If you need/want a ride call 816.213.4687

Peg's Pen

The past few months have been extremely busy for your league Board and members as you can see from the articles on Transit, Forums and membership. Marti Wheaton and I went to Sedalia for a four hour training on vote411. Vote411 is the League's and YOUR one-stop-shop for election information. It provides nonpartisan information to the public with both general and state-specific ballot and voting information. After Marti and I came home exhausted by the task ahead we are proud to say with the help of Pauli Kendrick we have completed the Kansas City, Jackson, Clay, Platte and Cass county election ballot information. The Board heard your direction at last year's annual meeting and we have dedicated ourselves to continue to do an on-line version of the VOTERS guide. Go to www.VOTE411.org and check it out. If you see any errors in the information; please don't hesitate to let me know. As I said this is our 1st attempt to do this Voter Guide and it is certainly a learning experience; one that I am truly proud of. Let's get the word out to our family, friends and co-workers. Thanks to Marti Wheaton who published her Eastern Jackson County 2 page Voter Guide. She distributed over 200 copies to family/friends/neighbors -- even with her dislocated shoulder!!! Special thanks to Pauli Kendrick and Marti Wheaton for your personal time and commitment to this project. And thanks to the entire Board for its support of this project. Perry Fowler, our webmaster is going to attempt to get a link on our lwvkc.org website that will take folks directly to vote411, so watch for that. Read below regarding more information on VOTE411.



Even if we think we know all there is to know about the candidates at the top of the ticket, many of us still need more information about those running for other important offices like U.S. House and Senate or state legislature. Go to www.VOTE411.org and enter your address to get personalized information on candidates and issues. In addition to naming every candidate for federal and state office we have listed all local candidates and issue statements gathered by state and local League volunteers.

In these last weeks before the election, excitement is building, and every vote is important. When we go to vote there will be more than just residency in the Oval Office on the line. ***It's about our families and our communities from the top of the ticket all the way down to the local races.*** It's about our jobs, environment and health care, and educating our youth.

VOTE411.org allows you to compare candidates' answers, in their own words, so you can decide who will best represent your values and ideas if elected. Voting means you have an impact on these critical issues and the policies that will be implemented in the coming years.

Voting brings us together as Americans – it is the one time when we are all equal. It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, young or old, liberal or conservative. Election Day is your opportunity to support your community and have a say in America's future.

[Use VOTE411.org to find out who's on your ballot and review where the candidates stand on the issues that matter most to you.](http://VOTE411.org) Then, set up your personalized voting guide that will include up-to-date information you need to cast your ballot, including your polling place, voting rules, and deadlines.

Please share this vital election resource with your friends and family so that they, too, are prepared to vote, and join with your neighbors in voting in this election.

Constitutional Amendment No. 3 -- Nonpartisan Court Plan

Missouri's Nonpartisan Court Plan is a model for the nation with over thirty states adopting the same or a similar court plan. Why then would the state legislature choose to ask voters in November to dismantle this successful judge selection process?

To put it simply, the proposed changes to the plan would give the governor more power in the judicial selection process, bringing partisan politics into a system that is presently fair and impartial.

The League of Women Voters supported the Nonpartisan Court Plan from its inception. There is no evidence that the plan needs changing.

Prior to 1940, when the Nonpartisan Court Plan became law, Missourians elected judges. Tired of the corruption and the influence of the political machine in Kansas City and the political bosses in St. Louis, Missouri voters, by initiative petition, amended the constitution to give the governor the power to appoint judges from a list developed by a nonpartisan judicial selection commission. Judges are now chosen based on merit rather than political party. The influence of campaign money is gone and candidates for judgeships no longer need to spend time fundraising or campaigning. They can do their jobs.

The Nonpartisan Court Plan applies to the Missouri Court of Appeals and Supreme Court and St. Louis City and St. Louis County in the eastern part of the state. It covers Jackson, Clay and Platte Counties in the Kansas City area. Greene County in the Springfield area recently voted to forego the election of judges for the nonpartisan plan.

The Nonpartisan Court Plan candidates for judicial appointment are scrutinized by the judicial selection commission. The candidates go through a rigorous application, research and interview process on background, education, competency, experience and temperament. The commission thoroughly studies each applicant and chooses the three best candidates from which the governor selects one to fill a vacancy on the court. After the judge serves one year, citizens vote at the next election on whether to retain the judge. Additionally, at the end of each judge's term, citizens vote on whether to retain the judge. The option of impeachment by the legislature is also available. In over 70 years since the Nonpartisan Court Plan has been in effect, voters have retained all but two judges.

The Judicial Selection Commission is composed of three lawyers selected by the Missouri Bar Association, three non-lawyers appointed by the governor plus the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

The ballot proposal, if approved by the voters, would modify the composition of the Appellate Judicial Commission and the selection process for judges to the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. It would eliminate the chief justice as a member, give the governor the power to appoint four citizen members who may be lawyers in addition to the three lawyers the Bar Association appoints. It would increase from three to four the number of nominees the commission presents to the governor and would eliminate the staggered terms of the commissioners allowing the governor to appoint four members in his first year in office.

If one wants to be assured that politics will not enter the judicial selection process, that the judges are beholden to no one but the public, that the selection process is open and transparent, that ordinary people have a place on the judicial selection commission, and that the candidates for judge are selected based on merit, Vote No on November 6, 2012. You will be in good company. The Missouri Bar Association, present and former Missouri Supreme Court judges appointed by both Democrat and Republican governors and many other civic organizations warn against tinkering with the Nonpartisan Court Plan.

We have seen what happens in other states when politics enter the judicial appointment process. One of the few areas where Missouri has gained positive national recognition is our Nonpartisan Court Plan. The League of Women Voters urges voters to maintain a just and impartial court by voting no on Constitutional Amendment 3. Let's be proud of Missouri's judicial record and not turn back the clock.

Why does the League oppose Amendment 3?

The League believes that the non-partisan court plan is just, fair and impartial. It has kept politics out of the judicial system where it is used. The League would like to see it extended to other jurisdictions. The legislature has unsuccessfully attempted to eliminate the plan. Amendment 3 was initiated by the legislature which means it did not have to go through the initiative process. It is an attempt to incrementally weaken the non-partisan court plan by giving the governor more power in the selection of judges. If passed, the governor, a partisan political person, will be able to appoint a majority of the judicial commission. He could appoint four justices in one term. He could do away with the non-lawyer members of the commission. This weakens the democratic selection process. By disallowing a judge

from being a voting member of the judicial commission, it deprives the commission of its most expert member. The League believes that this constitutional amendment is just the first step in dismantling a judicial system that has served Missouri well for the last sixty years.

LWV MO

Vote NO on Amendment 3 on Nov 6

Proposition A---Local Control of St Louis Police

If passed Missouri law will be amended to allow the transfer of control of the city's police force from the board of commissioner currently appointed by the governor to the city. The measure also establishes procedures for governing the police force and prohibits retaliation against any employee of the municipal police force who reports conduct believed to be illegal to a superior, government agency or the press.

Proponents say the local taxes are used to pay the cost of the St Louis Police Department. They believe that the wording of the measure allows the creation of a Civilian Review Board while providing police officers adequate protection. Mayor Slay and the St Louis Police Officer Association & other community groups' support the measure.

Opponents say that local control would bring politics into the police department, encourage corruption and jeopardize the pension system.

This is of interest to you because if this is successful it leaves KC as the only city in the nation without local police control. In Mayor Sly James opinion local control offers opportunities for financial stability and political accountability that are not readily available under the current system. However, unlike the St. Louis Police the local KC police department has some concerns at this time.----LWV MO

Proposition B---Cigarette Tax ---LWV Supports

The League of Women Voters urges voters to support Proposition B, the cigarette tax, on November 6, 2012. If passed, this tax will have many positive features. First and foremost it will reduce the number of smokers, especially among young people. It will provide programs to reduce and prevent tobacco use. And it will provide much needed funds for public education at all levels, elementary, secondary, college and university.

The money collected from this tax will go directly into a newly created Health and Education Trust Fund. This fund has three components, the Tobacco Use Prevention and Quit Assistance Account, the Public Education Account and the Public Higher Education Account. The law spells out exactly how the law will be implemented and the categories for which the money will be spent.

Missouri's current 17 cents tax per pack is the lowest cigarette tax in the country. The increase provided in Proposition B will increase the tax to approximately \$.90, still on the low side among state tobacco taxes.

The proposal will include other tobacco products such as loose tobacco used for roll your own cigarettes or cigars.

Public education has been short changed by the legislature in recent years. School districts have had to cut or modify education opportunities for students. Access to higher education is financially beyond the reach of many families.

Tobacco is not a necessary purchase. So in that sense the tobacco tax is a voluntary tax.

Proposition B will have health and educational benefits. It is a win-win situation. The League believes that the passage of Proposition B will be beneficial to Missouri.

LWV MO

Vote yes on Prop B on November 6, 2012.

Affordable Care Act---Prop E

The concept of a health insurance exchange is a one-stop shop for a health care plan, so people can compare benefits and prices, and choose the plan that is best for them, in the same way that Members of Congress and their families can. None of the plans in the exchange should deny coverage on the basis of a preexisting condition, and all of these plans should include an affordable basic benefit package that includes prevention, and protection against catastrophic costs. The governments of Kansas and Missouri have been slow to establish their exchanges; should they fail to do so federally-operated exchanges will step in to provide health insurance options for citizens of those states.

All exchanges must be fully certified and operational by January 1, 2014 under federal law.

If passed the governor and/or state agencies cannot set up health care exchanges, required by the Affordable Care Act, unless they are created by a legislative act, ballot initiative or veto referendum.

Proponents say that the governor or Missouri state agencies should not be able to enact this program without legislative or voter action. They say that the free market is the best way to provide consumers with health care insurance options and that the exchange program will cost consumers more than present policies. In addition they argue the federal assistance to set up and maintain health care insurance exchanges would not produce programs that would improve medical care for Missourians.

Opponents say that Missouri must follow federal law and that the Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act in June, 2012. They also say that if this ballot measure passes, Missouri will lose federal funds targeted to help states set up and maintain health care exchanges. They also say that health care exchanges will provide consumers with a variety of high quality, economical insurance policies and that more people will get the care they need, lowering the cost of Missouri Medicaid program

Some things to think about. The law goes further than some may realize at first reading of the ballot language. The ballot measure would prohibit the employees of certain departments and agencies in the state from cooperating with federal departments that will, by existing federal law, be setting up a "federally facilitated" or "partnership" exchange in Missouri.

There is also a provision in the law that would allow for any Missouri taxpayer that feels harmed by an exchange to bring a lawsuit against that department or agency that aided in the creation of an

exchange. The cost of defending the lawsuit and the cost of a successful plaintiff's judgment would fall on the department or agency.

So there may be a chilling effect among those who are in charge of implementing an existing federal law in the state.

It places state employees at odds with federal law.

It could cause significant inefficiencies in the implementation of existing federal law in the State of Missouri that may produce added expense to the state and its taxpayers.

LWV

Vote NO on Prop. E. on Nov. 6

LWV President Elisabeth McNamara Visits KC

September 23-24, Kansas City was honored to welcome LWV President Elisabeth McNamara on her 'Road to Election 2012' a 10 state tour. Her two-day stop in KC included a reception with local members, a visit to Center High School with Margie Richcreek to register students to vote, and visits to the Jackson County Election Board in Independence and the Johnson County Election Board. For more information and pictures, see the next issue of the "MO Voter."



Membership Report

Our Sept Membership "Kick Off" Meeting was a success. I want to thank our northland members for hosting the event. I am pleased to say that we had several guests and now we are welcoming new member, Sher Wilde. Please add her contact information to your roster -816-587-9027-cell 816-807-5030-home sherwilde@earthelink.net . Jill Cornett and Lysle Weeks also renewed their membership at the September meeting.

Because members are telling their friends about the important work we do educating ourselves and the community on the candidates and ballot issues, we have several other people interested and I expect them to join the League soon. **Please keep inviting** your friends to our meetings. Please note there has been a change in the order of our speakers for our upcoming programs. Save the following dates and plan to attend with a friend.

Nov. 17 "Democracy for Sale" - Corporate Personhood--- Presenter: Mary Lindsay from Move to Amend

Dec. 8 "Who is going to Feel the Pinch" (Current Economic Issues)

Presenter: Dr. Stephanie Kelton, Chair, Department of Economics, UMKC
And our HOLIDAY LUNCHEON Cost \$15.00.

As membership chairman I want to let everyone know there is a spot in the League for you. You may do hands on work by joining a committee, assist with voter services projects or provide financial support that helps increase our impact. Please renew your membership if you haven't already done so by completing the form elsewhere in the Voter and sending your check to LWV of KC/JCP P.O. Box104016

Kansas City, MO 64171-0416. Our dues are \$50 for individual membership and \$75 for a 2 member household. Donna Hoch, Membership Chair 816-322-8071 or 816-868-1083 thehochs@hotmail.com

LWV Forums Report

In the Northland, Leaguers attended a Candidate Meet & Greet held by Northland Neighborhoods and Northland Neighborhoods' Ribbon cutting for their new location.

The forum for Missouri Representative District 28 [Aziere/McDonald] in Raytown was a success and can be watched on Raytownonline.com. The Raytown Area Chamber of Commerce co-sponsored. The Raytown AAUW assisted.

Charlie & Anitra Steele

Nominating Committee The work of the LWVKC/JCP Nominating Committee 2013-14 has begun. Please contact any of us to nominate yourself or another member, with permission, for a position on our Board. Caroline Arnold, Delores Blaser, Patricia Keairnes, Sherry Templeton, Carolyn Weeks, Chair - Margie Richcreek

Jackson County Transit Studies Update There was no surprise when Jackson County announced that it would not put a transit tax measure on the ballot **this November**. There are still too many unknowns, and a comprehensive package will take more time to develop. Better to do this right than fast.

We expect to see such a package submitted to the voters sometime in 2013, though perhaps not until the second half of the year. For more information see the Transit Action Network website <http://transactionkc.com>.

Margie Richcreek

LVW-MO Fall Conference

LVW-MO Fall Conference will be in Sedalia, MO. November 10, 2012 – 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM. As in past few years your Local league will pay the \$15 registration fee. Please let Peg Prendergast know if you would like to go. We will arrange for car pooling which will likely leave KC at 7am that morning. lwwkjcjcp@yahoo.com or 816.213.4687.

Calendar

November 6---Election Day

November 10—League of Women Voters/Missouri Fall Meeting in Sedalia, Missouri—See Voter article.

November 12—Board of Directors Meeting 7-8:30 Raytown Christian Church; 6108 Blue Ridge Blvd.

November 17—General Meeting—Community Christian Church; 4601 Main St.; Kansas City; Lower Level 10-11:30 Topic: "Democracy for Sale" - Corporate Personhood.

December 8-- General Meeting and **Christmas Luncheon**—Community Christian Church; 10:30-1:00pm
See Front Page for Details – ACT NOW!!

LWV KC/J/C/P Officers:

President: Peg Prendergast
Vice President: Joan Mills
Secretary: Pauline Testerman
Treasurer: Elaine Lenz

Directors

Pauli Kendrick	Sue Scholl
Charles Steele	Cheryl Barnes
Donna Ryan	Linda Vogel-Smith
Donna Hoch	Margie Richcreek

Join the League of Women Voters

Name(s)

Address

Phone

_____ cell# _____

Email

address _____

I am a new member

I am renewing my membership

This is a gift membership. (Please provide the recipient's contact information above.)

I am interested in volunteering for the League. Please contact me.

Annual dues: \$50 Individual--- \$75 Household---\$25 Full-time students attending an accredited institution. Membership grants are available. Call 816-868-1083 for more information.

I want to make an additional tax deductible contribution and have written a separate check made out to LWV Education Fund.

Please make membership check payable to LWV of KC/JCP Counties.

Mail to: League of Women Voters P.O. Box 10416, Kansas City, MO 64171-0416